

City of Northampton, MA
Transportation and Parking Commission

June 18, 2019

MEETING MINUTES

Submitted by: Beth A. Kaplowitt

1. Councilor Jim Nash called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. and announced that there would be audio/video recording of this meeting.
2. Members present and absent/introductions:

Member	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Councilor Jim Nash, Chair	X	
Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Vice Chair	X	
Donna LaScaleia, DPW Director	X	
Jody Kasper, Chief of Police	X	
Wayne Feiden, Director of Planning and Sustainability	X	
David Pomerantz, Director of Central Services	X	
Debin Bruce, Citizen	X	
Gary Hartwell, Citizen	X	
Adam Novitt, Citizen	X	
Jami Albro-Fisher, Citizen	Absent	
Alan Verson, Planning Board	X	
Staff	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Nanci Forrestall, Parking Enforcement	X	
Maggie Chan, Traffic Engineer	X	
Beth A. Kaplowitt, DPW Clerk	X	

3. Brief promotion of Pace Car Program:
 - Councilor Nash said that participation in the program involves a pledge to drive the speed limit. The hope is that if enough people join the program, the result will be the lowering of the speed limit.
4. Public comment:
 - David Bergengren of 19 Wilder Place asked if the TPC had, as planned, developed a City-wide line striping policy over the winter. Councilor Nash said that he had discussed the issue with Director LaScaleia, and it was decided that they would take each street on a case by case basis. He sent Director LaScaleia a memo regarding Wilder Avenue and Grove Street in Leeds. David noted that the “No Parking” signs are now up on the west side of the street. He would like to see striping reflect a limit of one parking spot per lot. He also noted that the 1st & 3rd houses on the right have walkways

that go straight to the house. When people park there, the owners don't have access. He also asked about the parking spot on the right as you are pulling out from Wilder which blocks the view. Councilor Nash said that the TPC forwarded it with a positive recommendation to City Council, where it was also approved. It was sent on to the DPW, and he thinks they are working on it. He will discuss the line striping with Director LaScaleia and will get back to Mr. Bergengren.

5. Approval of minutes from the previous meeting:

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To approve the minutes from the April 23, 2019 meeting.	Gary Hartwell	David Pomerantz	Yes, 9 No, 0 Abstain, 1

6. Reports from departments and subcommittees/announcements/presentations:

- Department of Public Works (DPW) Updates – Traffic Engineer Maggie Chan:

- **Roadway Improvement Projects**

- a. Palmer Paving is continuing work on the Burts Pit Road paving project between Clement Street and Forest Glen Drive. The first layer of pavement has been installed. Final paving is scheduled for the first week of July;
- b. Warner Brothers is continuing work on the Glendale Road and Bridge Road project. The contractor is currently working on drainage improvements and structure work for both streets;
- c. The Chesterfield Road, Spring Street, Cross Street and Main Street Leeds project has been awarded to Palmer Paving for approximately \$2.1 million. This project has commenced. The contractor is installing construction signs and tree protection;

- **Clement Street Bridge**

- a. N.E.L. Corporation will be making deck repairs to the Clement Street Bridge. The schedule for this work will be communicated once that is available;

- **Intersection Study Request for Proposals**

- a. A request for proposals was issued for a traffic study at the intersections of Pine Street/Maple Street/Mann Terrace, Westhampton Road/Glendale Road/West Farms Road, and several intersections along the State Street corridor. The purpose of this study is to gather and analyze traffic data and recommend countermeasures that will improve safety and transportation conditions. Fuss & O'Neill was selected for this study and the project cost is around \$40,000;

- **Exit 19 Roundabout**

- a. MassDOT has contracted with Balthazar Contractors, Inc. to construct a roundabout and associated improvements to the Exit 19 interchange by the Coolidge Bridge. The work is scheduled to be completed by June 2021. Questions about this project should be directed to MassDOT District 2.

- Department of Planning and Sustainability Updates – Director Wayne Feiden:
 - Repair of root damage to the bike path downtown is being done by Precise Paving and the project is about 80% complete;
 - The contract with E T & L to build a 9/10 mile bike path from Burts Pit Road to Overlook Drive to Sandy Hill Road is scheduled to begin about July 1st;
 - There will be a walk-through of the Leonard Street and Haydenville Road area in Leeds regarding a project for which a Public Meeting was held about five years ago. Traffic mitigation funds were used to look into the situation at the time;
 - The Mayor has made \$100,000 available for the re-design of Streetscape. There will be a meeting on 6/24/19 to follow up to see what people want. It's the 1st step in the process;
 - A grant has been received for \$10,000 for lighter/quicker/cheaper solutions regarding ways to make the streets friendlier for different groups (such as the elderly);
 - The Exit 19 roundabout project will be a challenging situation over the course of two construction seasons (2020-2021). There will be 3 - 4 major projects happening simultaneously.
- Bicycle & Pedestrian Sub-Committee – Debin Bruce
 - Director Feiden chairs this committee;
 - The last meeting was in May 2019, and seven of nine members were present;
 - They will be meeting again tomorrow (June 19, 2019);
 - Ms. Bruce has taken on the task of reporting back to the TPC regarding the meetings.

5. Matters before the Commission:

- a. Update on passenger rail (presented by Terry Masterson):
 - **North-South rail**
 - ❖ This line has a new name: “The Connecticut River Line;”
 - ❖ The start date is still unknown;
 - ❖ The frequency is expected to be two trains in the morning (around 6:00 a.m. & 8:00 a.m.) and two trains in the evening (around 8:00 p.m. & 10:00 p.m.)
 - ❖ There may also be one or two trains heading south, but the start date for that is unclear;
 - ❖ Ticket prices will not be fixed – they will likely be peak vs. off-peak;
 - ❖ This was originally scheduled to be a four year pilot program, but it has now been reduced to a two year pilot program;
 - ❖ The ridership expectations, which seemed reasonable, have now been elevated to a doubling of the existing ridership;
 - ❖ The State has allocated no money for marketing for the project;
 - ❖ Jo Comerford is working to get \$250,000 on the Senate side of the budget;
 - ❖ Senator Lesser has said that this project is not a success-oriented project – rather, it is intended to deny and stall rail expansion;
 - ❖ There has been some talk about a route that would go from Pittsfield to Penn Station on Fridays at 2:30 p.m. for 8 months of the year that would have a fare of \$75;
 - ❖ The platform is being extended. It should be finished soon;
 - **Vermont line**
 - ❖ Carries over 19,000 riders per year;
 - ❖ Northampton, Greenfield and Holyoke represent over 1/3 of those riders;

- **Hartford line**
 - ❖ Although it is only a year old, there are 2,000 people per day riding;
 - ❖ 11,000 people per month are coming out of Springfield;
- The State is doing a comprehensive rail plan. Anyone can go to their website to make comments;
- He recommends using the Windsor Locks station (Exit 42). There is free parking;
- The Springfield station is working on constructing a raised platform;
- Many of these projects are years behind schedule;
- Adam Novitt summarized:
 - ❖ Expanded rail service is coming but it will now be a two year pilot (rather than the previously announced 4 years) with double the ridership expectations;
 - ❖ There has been no money allocated to advertise the service in order to achieve the greatly intensified goals;
 - ❖ He asked: If the goals are not met, is there something that happens? Terry responded that in that case, State Transit officials will shut the service down;
 - ❖ The cost for the project from 2009 -2015 has been about \$70 million. The cost to run the two trains/day is projected to be only about \$1 million. So, we spent lots of money, but now don't want to capitalize the investment;
 - ❖ Terry said that the Boston Globe is starting to push some of these questions.

b. PVTA Presentation:

Paul spoke briefly about the R44 route change that's been discussed, which involves making the route into a loop, which will also increase the time by ten minutes. Jamin Carroll [Director of Operations for Valley Area Transit (VATCo)] was also present;

- PVTA spoke to 30 participants (riders). Fifteen supported the changes, 10 were somewhat supportive, and 4 were ambivalent;
- Paul asked how the TPC would like to go ahead. PVTA wants to go ahead with it and implement the change to test it out for 6 months to a year. He realizes that this is not on the agenda, so the TPC can't have a formal vote on the topic, but he would like to get a feeling of TPC's feedback;
- Debin Bruce asked how the PVTA will use feedback to decide if the trial is successful. Paul replied that they would be using rider surveys and ridership data;
- One TPC member said yes, and no others expressed any questions or concerns, so Paul recommends going forward with the project, testing it out for 6 – 12 months.

c. PVTA bus stop on Bridge Street across from the Post Office:

- The PVTA's Jamin gave the floor to Director LaScaleia;
- Director LaScaleia said that the current inbound stop by the Bridge Street cemetery is very close to the school and is right in the middle of all that. The new inbound stop opposite the outbound stop in front of the Post Office is a good solution. The DPW has reviewed the proposal and has determined that it is a reasonable solution. The sightlines are sufficient. They have drafted an Ordinance to make this an official stop.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send 19.XXX An Ordinance Relative to Bus Stops on Bridge Street to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Wayne Feiden	Yes, 10 No, 0 Abstain, 0

d. Discussion of proposed ordinances related to changes in parking in the downtown area:

- There are eleven proposed parking changes relating to the area around Smith College. They largely involve adding metered parking in a number of locations where there is currently just on-street parking. They also are intended to correct what is already happening in the field;
- There is a City Administrator's group that meets monthly to review parking related issues, and these are their recommendations. Director Feiden, Nanci Forrestall & Traffic Engineer Chan are all members of this group. The recommendations are outside of the scope of the parking study that was done a few years ago. They have asked the TPC to do some community outreach;
- Councilor Nash stated that he would like to slow this process down, because we are discussing adding metered spaces in and around Smith College. The areas involved are all in Councilor Bidwell's ward, and Councilor Nash has forwarded the package of information to Councilor Bidwell. Both Councilors would like to slow things down to give them a chance to meet with Smith College students and administrators to solicit their input;
- Elm Street is used by lots of commuters who use the PVTA to go to UMass, Amherst and Hadley;
- Director Feiden said that 20 years ago almost no one used the park-and-ride lot at Sheldon Field for the 1st year. Then, when meters were installed on the lower part of Elm Street, the Sheldon Field lot suddenly became heavily used, and has been heavily used ever since;
- Twelve years ago when Smith College built Ford Hall, they had to do a lot of traffic mitigation. The cost for a parking pass increased dramatically. This was successful except that there was also an increase in the number of vehicles that were parking on Elm Street;
- Nanci Forrestall said that there will be six additional meters added on West Street;
- Traffic Engineer Chan said that meters will be added to painted spaces on Arnold Avenue;
- Debin Bruce said that she is surprised that three TPC members go to the City Administrator's group;
- Councilor Nash said that he has spoken to The Mayor's Chief of Staff Lyn Simmons, and got the sense that the changes on West Street were the most important. Consequently, he suggested that the TPC looks at this proposal 1st (today);
- Councilor Nash thinks that the Arnold Avenue and Belmont Avenue changes should maybe wait until Smith College students and administrators are back in the area;
- Councilor Nash also suggested that the TPC should be particularly thoughtful with Elm Street;
- Director Feiden responded to a question from Councilor Nash that Smith College input has not been solicited for this current round;
- From his conversation with Lyn Simmons, Councilor Nash said that the idea is to make the meters in the West Street (Route 66) area consistent with those around Arnold Avenue, and also to raise some income for the City.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send An Ordinance To Amend Chapter 312-109 of the Code Book to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Adam Novitt	Yes, 9 No, 0 Abstain, 1

○ West St (Route 66)

- From his conversation with Lyn Simmons, Councilor Nash said that the idea is to make the meters in the West Street (Route 66) area consistent with those around Arnold Avenue, and also to encourage people to use the garage;
- Adam Novitt said that he is generally in favor, especially if Smith College is effectively charging their staff to park; it is just clarifying what is currently being done;
- Director Feiden & Adam Novitt both like the ideas presented because they will clearly define the spaces and may encourage people to use cars less;
- Councilor Sciarra wondered if there were any concerns about residents parking in the spaces, rather than just Smith College students and staff. Nanci Forrestall said that there are some, but that residents will most likely park after 6:00 p.m., which will be OK;
- Adam Novitt said that he likes the turnover that meters promote. When meters went in to the Forbes library parking lot, it was a good thing. It kept students from using the lot for long term parking.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send a proposal to stripe and meter all of the suggested proposed spaces on West Street to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Adam Novitt	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Yes, 9 No, 0 Abstain, 1

○ Belmont Avenue

- Belmont Avenue runs off of Green Street;
- Traffic Engineer Chan said that the measurements have not yet been finalized for Belmont Avenue;
- The Belmont Avenue and Arnold Avenue meters will be 10 hour meters;
- Director Feiden & Adam Novitt have concerns that if we put this proposal off in order to have a discussion with Smith College representatives, the timeline for the project could get potentially very drawn out;

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send a proposal to stripe and meter all of the suggested proposed spaces on Belmont Avenue, with the actual measurements to be adjusted as necessary by the DPW, to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Adam Novitt	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Yes, 9 No, 0 Abstain, 1

○ Arnold Avenue

- On Arnold Avenue there is a similar scenario to the other streets. There is no current Ordinance to make metered zones and do striping. There is some striping,

but it is very faded. This street is right by the Smith College campus like Belmont Avenue and West Street.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send a proposal to stripe and meter all of the suggested proposed spaces on Arnold Avenue, with the actual measurements to be adjusted as necessary by the DPW, to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Wayne Feiden	Jody Kasper	Yes, 9 No, 0 Abstain, 1

o Elm Street

- Elm Street has high usage by students, staff and commuters. It is really almost in the middle of the Smith college campus;
- Chief Kasper would like to see the current prohibitions on overnight parking remain in place;
- Adam Novitt and Director Feiden would like to allow overnight parking;
- Nanci Forrestall would like to see the current prohibitions on overnight parking remain in place, because she has concerns about overnight parking similar to her concerns about Bedford Terrace, where students can buy a monthly permit (\$45) for these long term meters, and then they just leave their cars there.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To send the Ordinance as written (overnight parking remains prohibited) regarding Elm Street to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Wayne Feiden	David Pomerantz	Yes, 9 No, 0 Abstain, 1

e. Discussion of Glendale Road No Parking Zone:

- Glendale Road is in Councilor Labarge's Ward, and Councilor Nash says that she feels very positively about this Ordinance;
- Director LaScaleia said that when the vestiges of the active landfill were being cleaned up, there was a problem with trucks idling outside the gates. Since this is no longer a problem the No Parking Ordinance is no longer needed.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To accept the DPW's recommendation to amend the Glendale Road No Parking Ordinance to remove the no parking zone and send it to City Council with a positive recommendation.	Jody Kasper	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Yes, 10 No, 0 Abstain, 0

6. New Business

- Councilor Nash said that he likes to have summer meetings only if needed. He asked members to let him know if they have agenda items that must be dealt with during the summer months. He will then make a decision about whether or not to cancel the July 16th and August 20th meetings.

7. Adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Motion	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
Adjourn.	Gina-Louise Sciarra	Wayne Feiden	Yes, 10 No, 0 Abstain, 0